



# Small School Advantages. Big School Opportunities.

## Welcome

### A message from the principal

**I am excited to welcome your family to Westonka Middle School!**

My name is Christy Zachow, and I am proud to be your middle school principal. I have worked in Westonka Public Schools since 1999. Having experienced the district at all levels, both as an employee and a parent, I can honestly say that your child is in very good hands at Westonka.

I am so proud of our students, staff and families and the collaboration and partnerships we have built here. I look forward to welcoming you to Westonka Middle School, where our small school advantages and big school opportunities will lead to your student's success.



**Christy Zachow**  
Principal  
(952) 491-8001  
zachowc@westonka.k12.mn.us

# Middle School Fast Facts

Grandview Middle School (Westonka Middle School next year!) serves approximately 600 students in grades 5-7. Our students consistently rank among the best in the state on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.



## #1 District Ranking

among traditional public school districts by SchoolDigger in 2024



## #7 Best Middle School

ranking by U.S. News & World Report



## 95% of Residents

rate the quality of education in Westonka as "excellent" or "good"



## 'A' School Rating

from Niche in 2024



## #1 in Grade 6 Math

2024 standardized assessments



## #2 in Grade 7 Reading

2024 standardized assessments



## #1 in Grade 5 Science

2024 standardized assessments



Upon entering middle school, all new students are invited to take part in WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) - a transitioning program to help 5th grade students get familiar with the school, make new friends and gain extra support from 7th-grade student leaders.



As a PBIS school, we are dedicated to a positive and supportive learning environment that teaches and celebrates PRIDE (Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Discipline and Effort).



The Morning Meeting advisory program helps students connect with other students and their teachers. Throughout the year, this time is also used to provide enrichment opportunities and intervention opportunities for students.

## Middle School Highlights



Technology, STEM, art and Post Secondary Skills electives in all grades



Band and choir music options



Google Chromebooks for all students



Accelerated and advanced programming in math, language arts, art and STEM



Youth sports opportunities



Ramp-Up to Readiness program provides high school, college and career prep



Before, during and after school academic support



Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meets regularly and supports a variety of school initiatives and activities



Second Step curriculum for character education



Regular student celebrations, including PRIDE Passes positive behaviour incentives, Portraits of PRIDE character awards and Reward Days to celebrate success

## Academic Enrichment

- Future Cities
- Future Problem Solvers
- LEGO Engineering
- Math Masters
- Geography Bee
- Spelling Bee
- Creativity Festival
- Continental Math
- Destination Imagination
- Word Master Open
- Yearbook
- Archery
- Community Education recreation and enrichment opportunities, including sports, Spanish classes, music lessons, and more!



# 5th Grade FAQs and Parent Tips

**How do I check my student's progress?** Many parents like this change in middle school, as we use an online gradebook in Skyward Family Access. You can check your child's progress 24/7 and can also set up notifications to get updates sent to you. Family Access is where we post grades. This is where you will also see if there is any work your child hasn't turned in.

**What is due tomorrow? What is coming up this week?** Teacher calendars can be found in Schoology. This is not the gradebook but rather where the calendar of assignments is located and where they can also find additional copies and rubrics. Often students will even submit work in Schoology. Your best resource for navigating Schoology is your child. They will learn how to find everything in Schoology. There are also tutorials available for parents on our website. Students should check the calendar in Schoology daily.

**What makes up their grade? 80% of their grade is Summative Assessments.** These are larger assignments, projects, papers, tests, etc. If a child does poorly, retakes are available, but will require some relearning tasks first. Students must score a 70% or better on summative assessments or else are required to retake the assessment. Scores below 70% are marked 'Missing' until the retake is taken. Students who score above 70% but want to improve are also allowed to retake summative assessments. **20% of their grade is Formative Assessments**, which includes practice activities such as weekly paragraphs, smaller quizzes and homework. In some situations, if a student does poorly, another attempt is allowed. Typically, students do not retake formative assessments, as they impact the grade very little and are intended as practice.

**What grades are used?** Thanks to Westonka grading reform, the middle school and primary schools now have a more similar grading scale with 4 levels. Middle school grades are also tied to percentages and are viewable immediately in Family Access. Typically having grades viewable right away can be a bit overwhelming for kids and parents, especially if the student has a low score early on. Don't worry! There are lots of opportunities over time to improve grades!

Primary Grades	Middle School Grades
<b>BEG</b> Beginning Standard	<b>D</b> The student has not met the grade level expectation. Skill scores are less than 70%.
<b>APR</b> Approaching Standard	<b>C</b> The student is approaching grade level expectations. They may meet some standards but not others. Skill scores range from 70%-80%
<b>MET</b> Meets Standard	<b>B</b> The student has met grade level expectations with occasional errors. Skill scores range from 80%-90%
<b>EXT</b> Extends Standard	<b>A</b> The student has met grade level expectations and can apply skills and content beyond grade level standard. The student makes very few errors on grade level content. Skill scores range from 90%-100%.

**How much homework can I expect?** This will vary but typically there is homework daily in math and a few days a week in other classes. However, teachers work hard to give students time in class to get started and sometimes even complete work. If a child continually says they are done with homework, a quick check of the Schoology calendar and the gradebook will help monitor that. Every child is different as far as how much monitoring and reminding they need, and you will know your child best. If your child seems to be spending excessive amounts of time on homework, please contact the teacher.

**What if my student needs homework help?** If a student falls behind or needs to take a test, it is usually best for them to connect with the teacher first and arrange a plan. The good news is that because so much of what we do is available on Schoology, if a child needs to be gone for some reason, it is possible to keep up with the class. In addition, Homework Club is offered after school Mondays-Thursdays, free of charge, and many students attend regularly in order to complete missing work, take tests or just stay on top of daily work. An Activity Bus is available (students must sign up during Morning Meeting). In addition, students will have time during Morning Meeting several days a week to complete missing work and/or get help.

**Will there be opportunities to meet teachers and see the school?** Yes! We will have Open House and another Orientation in the fall, so students can walk the halls and find classes as well as meet teachers and classmates!

**How do I manage the Chromebook?** Again, kids are the best resource. First quarter teachers work with them to bookmark frequently visited pages and get them familiar with useful apps. Also note that when students log into their Google accounts on their Chromebook, even at home, they still get the benefit of our school filtering software. Below are some of the best tips parents have shared on how to manage it all:

- Charge the Chromebook in the same place every night and NOT in their room. It can be a potential distraction.
- Have your child use their Chromebook in a place where they can be monitored by an adult. Even with great filtration software, kids can still get off-task if not reminded often to stay on-task. Pretty soon a 20-minute assignment is taking 2 hours.
- Even though the device is a school device, it is OK for parents to limit their child's use of it. Saying no to devices during dinner or after certain hours is a great habit!
- Purchase insurance! Accidents happen and it is nice to be covered when they do.

**My child was in GATES. How does that work here?** Just as other aspects of the middle school structure evolve, so does programming for our gifted students. Here students have the opportunity to challenge themselves with several advanced class options as well as co-curricular opportunities. Advanced Language Arts and Accelerated Mathematics courses are available in grades 5-7. In addition, students have enriched course opportunities during their specialist time which can be found in Course Offerings. In 5th grade, this option is Advanced STEM, in 6th grade Future Problem Solving and in 7th grade Future Cities. In addition, Mrs. Barrett, Hilltop GATES teacher, works with parents to help ensure a smooth transition. If at any time you feel like your child needs more of a challenge, Mrs. Barrett is here to help!

**Reaching Out With Questions:** You will find a link to our Orientation Presentation on our website. If you have specific questions about curriculum or other questions, please contact staff below and/or check out the course descriptions on our website.

Curriculum/Program	Name	Room	Role/Position	Email
Science	Mr. Swendseid	G13	Science/Social Teacher	swendseide@westonka.k12.mn.us
Accelerated Math	Mr. Runke	120	Math Teacher	runked@westonka.k12.mn.us
Math	Mrs. Ackerson Mrs. Frank	121 G12	Math Teacher	ackersone@westonka.k12.mn.us frankh@westonka.k12.mn.us
Language Arts	Mrs. Lunski	G22	Language Arts Teacher	lunskij@westonka.k12.mn.us
Advanced Language Arts	Mrs. Hoogeveen	G20	Language Arts Teacher	hoogeveenb@westonka.k12.mn.us
Social Studies	Mrs. Bonier	G14	Science/Social Teacher	bonierl@westonka.k12.mn.us
GATES	Mrs. Barrett	120	Hilltop GATES Teacher	barrettm@westonka.k12.mn.us
Special Education	Ms. Shirk	G10	SPED Teacher	shirka@westonka.k12.mn.us
Choir	Mrs. Klein	Choir Room	Choir Teacher	kleinf@westonka.k12.mn.us
Band	Mrs. Chilson	Cafeteria	Band Teacher	chilsong@westonka.k12.mn.us
Health Concerns	Mrs. Kaganovsky	Office	School Nurse	kaganovskys@westonka.k12.mn.us
504s and PBIS	Mrs. LoScalzo Mrs. Larson	Office	School Counselors	loscalzok@westonka.k12.mn larsonj2@westonka.k12.mn.us
Bullying Prevention & Student Management	Mr. David	Office	Assistant Principal	davidn@westonka.k12.mn.us